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FORMER CIA DIRECTOR CALLS REGAN'S HOSTAGE POLICY 'HYPOCRITICAL'

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A Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner said Wednesday the Reagan administration's reported delivery of arms to Iran "seriously hurt" the United States' ability to lead a worldwide battle against terrorism.

Turner, who headed the intelligence agency under President Jimmy Carter, also criticized the unconfirmed secret deals reportedly made to secure Iran's help in winning freedom for U.S. hostages in Iran as "hypocritical."

"We have seriously hurt our ability to lead a free-world coalition against terrorism," Turner told United Press International prior to taking part in a panel discussion in Manhattan on "disinformation," or the release of false information, by government agencies.

Turner, who headed the CIA from 1977 to 1981, said the arms activities had damaged the administration's credibility with its allies in the West.

"We had just importuned our friends not to sell arms" before the reports began to surface. As a result, providing arms to Iran "makes the administration appear to be hypocritical," he said.

The Reagan administration has not confirmed or denied reports that the United States may have supplied Iran with U.S.-made arms in exchange for Tehran's cooperation in freeing hostages held by pro-Iran extremists. The White House has said it has taken no illegal action.

Turner denounced the administration for failing to fully advise Congress of its actions.

"The president has got to make a real bow to the Congress this time," Turner said. "This administration has flouted the Congress and congressional oversight for six years."

If the government does conduct secret deals exchanging weapons for hostages, Congress will likely enact laws prohibiting the practice, he said.

By closely concealing and guarding its activities, "The White House is trying to avoid accountability" should its efforts to gain release of hostages fail, Turner said.

Turner said the administration was wrong to aggressively pursue improved diplomatic links with Iran, regardless of their value in getting hostages out of Lebanon, because the Iranian government remains hostile to American interests.

The administration recently indicated it was seeking to establish closer ties with Iran.

"When the times comes that Iran is looking for an opening, we should not be in the forefront," he said.

During the panel discussion, sponsored by the Center for Communication, an educational group that brings together communications professionals and public policy makers, Turner said the administration was duplicitous in its approach to rescuing the hostages.

Days after hostage David Jacobsen was freed Nov. 2, he was flown to Washington for a public White House ceremony where Reagan "ballyhooed the event," Turner said. "Then he (Reagan) importuned the press not to talk about it."